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## STRATEGY ON CLUB SECTOR: AN APPLICATION OF THE ZACCARELLI AND FISCHMANN MODEL APPLICATION AT A SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT CLUB IN MINAS GERAIS

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### ABSTRACT

For organizations to remain competitive in the market, it is necessary to identify and adopt strategies appropriate to the operating environment. Minas Tênis Clube, the object of this study, adopted a series of strategies from 1980 to 2013 that were analyzed in the light of the work of Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994). In order to reach this objective, a bibliographical research was carried out considering the main concepts related to the themes of strategy, client and market. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 randomly chosen volunteers who had one or more of the following relationships with Minas Tênis Clube: partner or adviser, director, employee, representative of state or municipal public authority, partner company, supplier, athlete or former athlete. After saturation, these contents were submitted to content analysis according to Bardin. Generic Strategies (GS) can be adopted in a variety of ways and in various combinations, by all organizations, regardless of their size or the market in which they operate, expanding their operations or recovering lost customers or niches. This article aimed to identify and analyze the GS adopted in the management of the MTC in the last three decades, based on the model proposed by these authors. The results showed that the GS of Adaptation, Cooperation, Product-Market Differentiation and Opportunity were adopted in the management of this Club and were the most relevant in the period studied.

**Keywords:** Management. Strategy. Club. Sports. Planning.

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## **ESTRATÉGIA NO SETOR DE CLUBES: APLICAÇÃO DO MODELO DE ZACCARELLI AND FISCHMANN EM UM CLUBE DE ESPORTES E ENTRETENIMENTO EM MINAS GERAIS**

### **RESUMO**

Para que as organizações permaneçam competitivas no mercado, é necessário identificar e adotar estratégias apropriadas para o ambiente operacional. O Minas Tênis Clube (MTC), objeto deste estudo, adotou uma série de estratégias de 1980 a 2013 que foram analisadas à luz do trabalho de Zaccarelli e Fischmann (1994). Para atingir este objetivo, foi realizada uma pesquisa bibliográfica considerando os principais conceitos relacionados às questões de estratégia, cliente e mercado. Entrevistas semi-estruturadas foram realizadas com 25 voluntários selecionados aleatoriamente que tiveram um ou mais dos seguintes relacionamentos com Minas Tênis Clube: parceiro ou consultor, diretor, funcionário, representante do Estado ou autoridade pública local, parceiro de negócios, fornecedores, atleta ou ex- atleta. Após as entrevistas, os conteúdos foram analisados de acordo com Bardin. As Estratégias Genéricas (EG) podem ser adotadas de diferentes formas e em diferentes combinações, por todas as organizações, independentemente de seu porte ou do mercado em que atuam, expandindo suas operações, recuperando clientes perdidos ou nichos. O objetivo deste artigo foi identificar e analisar o EGs adotadas na gestão do MTC nas últimas três décadas, com base no modelo proposto por esses autores. Os resultados mostraram que as EG de Adaptação, Cooperação, Diferenciação de Produtos-Mercado e Oportunidades foram adotadas na gestão do Clube e foram as mais relevantes no período estudado.

**Palavras-chave:** Gestão. Estratégia. Clube. Esportes. Planejamento.

## **IMPLEMENTACIÓN DEL MODELO ZACCARELLI Y FISCHMANN EN UN CLUB DE DEPORTES Y ENTRETENIMIENTO EN MINAS GERAIS**

### **RESUMEN**

Para que las organizaciones sigan siendo competitivas en el mercado, es necesario identificar y adoptar estrategias apropiadas para el entorno operativo. Minas Tênis Clube, el objeto de este estudio, adoptó una serie de estrategias de 1980 a 2013 que fueron analizadas a la luz del trabajo de Zaccarelli y Fischmann (1994). Para alcanzar este objetivo, se llevó a cabo una investigación bibliográfica considerando los principales conceptos relacionados con los temas de estrategia, cliente y mercado. Se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas con 25 voluntarios elegidos al azar que tenían una o más de las siguientes relaciones con Minas Tênis Clube: socio o asesor, director, empleado, representante de la autoridad pública estatal o municipal, empresa asociada, proveedor, atleta o ex-atleta. Después de la saturación, estos contenidos se enviaron al análisis de contenido de acuerdo con Bardin. Las estrategias genéricas (SG) pueden ser adoptadas de diversas maneras y en diversas combinaciones por todas las organizaciones, independentemente de su tamaño o del mercado en el que operen, expandiendo sus operaciones o recuperando clientes o nichos perdidos. Este artículo tuvo como objetivo identificar y analizar la GS adoptada en la gestión de MTC en las últimas tres décadas, con base en el modelo propuesto por estos autores. Los resultados mostraron que los GS de Adaptación, Cooperación, Diferenciación de Producto-Mercado y Oportunidad fueron adoptados en la gestión de este Club y fueron los más relevantes en el período estudiado.

**Palabras clave:** gestión. Estrategia. Club. Deportes. Planificación.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The political, economic, social, cultural and technological transformations that have been taking place in Brazil in recent decades have generated new market trends, affecting the consumption habits of the population. As it should be, the sports club sector has also been influenced by all these changes, reflecting the profile of its customers and their sports and leisure habits. In this way, it becomes necessary a new posture of its managers in front of the challenges, in the eagerness to survive and to grow in markets whose competition has been quite fierce.

The formulation and implementation of effective strategies are fundamental conditions for organizations to create differentials that allow them to remain competitive in the most diverse markets. Thus, the strategies that are adopted by the clubs can help them to obtain or not satisfactory results.

The scientific literature in the area of Management shows that the strategy has been a very fertile and dynamic field of study, with contributions from authors from many different parts of the world (SLACK et al., 2009; RAHIMIC; USTOVIC, 2011; SILVA; LEPSCH, 2011; GIEZEN, 2013). In addition, in the business context, it's not possible to conceive of the existence of organizations that present a high level of success in their industries, without having effective strategies (GONÇALVES FILHO et al., 2011). It is understood, therefore, that to think strategically is essential for an adequate administration of the organizations, so that they can reach their goals and objectives, fulfilling its mission (MOORE, 2000; WILSON; JARZABKOWSKI, 2004, FARIA 2013).

Dissertating about strategy is not a simple task. The academic literature on the subject is broad, including from the most orthodox perspectives, which understand it as a rational, analytical and prescriptive process, even the postmodern ones, which attribute the

construction of strategy as a social event (PEREIRA et al., 2006).

Several authors have dedicated their studies to the Generic Strategies (GS), which can be adopted in different ways and in various combinations by organizations, regardless of their size or the market in which they operate (ZACCARELLI; FISCHMANN, 1994; KIM; MAUBORGNE, 2005; MINTZBERG et al., 2006; PRAHALAD; KRISHNAN, 2008; MINTZBERG; AHLSTRAND; LAMPEL, 2010).

Knowing and understanding the existing GS is fundamental so that companies can adopt those that best suit the organization and the moment that it is experiencing. In this sense, Brazilian clubs, seen as organizations that offer sports, leisure, culture and education services, need to adopt GS in their management to obtain positive results.

Among the existing clubs in Brazil, it is highlighted Minas Tênis Clube (MTC) as one of the most modern and complete socio-sport and cultural institutions of the country. Founded on November 15, 1935, the Club has approximately 21 thousand member-shareholders in 2016, which, together with its dependents, totaled approximately 73 thousand members. With four units, MTC has approximately 1,200 employees in its most diverse sectors and 100 trainees, 85 partner companies, and in 2015, revenues of approximately R \$ 125 million in partnerships, including around R\$ 2.6 million in contributions to projects approved in the Sports Incentive Law (MINAS TÊNIS CLUBE, 2016).

MTC maintains competition teams in a variety of sports, and its athletes are constantly invited to state and national teams (MINAS TÊNIS CLUBE, 2014). Several MTC athletes participated in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. In addition, the Club's infrastructure was used to train international athletes who competed in the aforementioned Olympiad (MINAS TÊNIS CLUBE, 2012; RIO 2016, 2012). It is observed that due to the variety of activities offered to members, due to their size in the area and number of members and their responsibility in culture and sport at the state and



national levels, MTC is one of the most important references in the sector. Therefore, it was adopted as the object of this study.

But in order to reach such a prominent position in the sports and leisure scene at the international level, an efficient strategic administration was also necessary (MINAS TÊNIS CLUBE, 2012; Faria 2013). However, throughout its more than 80 years of history, many decisions and actions have been taken without a full awareness of the theoretical basis of the strategy. That is, although more recently the strategies adopted by the Club tend to have a more deliberate character, in the past, many of them had a more emergent nature (MINTZBERG; WATERS, 1985; GONZALEZ; CAMPOS, 2015; NEUGEBAUER; FIGGE; HAHN, 2015; PEREIRA et al., 2014).

Considering the positive results achieved by MTC over the last decades and based on the GS proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), the following guiding question of the present research becomes urgent: what were the Generic Strategies adopted in the MTC management in the last three decades that allowed it to obtain results that highlight it in the sports club scene in Brazil?

In this context, the objective of the present work was to identify and analyze the GS adopted in the management of the MTC in the last three decades, based on the model proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994). This work is structured in four parts: theoretical background, methodology, results and discussion and conclusions of the study.

## 2. THEORETICAL GROUNDING

According to Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), the concept and use of GS appeared practically together with strategic planning. Although there are several studies on GS, creating multifaceted options such as Milles and Snow (1978), Porter (1989), Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), Mintzberg et al. (2006), Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2010), there is still no consensus among researchers on the subject. However, these authors aimed to give a

practical guide to the study of generic strategies, compiling the information in the literature. Finally, they were able to identify and validate 13 GS, namely: (i) product-market differentiation, (ii) functional differentiation, (iii) cooperation, (iv) innovation, (v) adaptation, reaction, (viii) opportunities, (ix) self-protection, (x) intent, (xi) deception, (xii) aggression and (xiii) divestment. Souki (2003) argues that one of the great advantages of GS proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) is that they are not mutually exclusive, that is, it is possible to adopt them simultaneously, which allows to enhance organizational performance.

It is important to highlight that the GS proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) have been used by several authors in different sectors of the economy. Costa and Antonialli (1997), for example, used this model to analyze the auto parts sector. Guimarães (2002) used it to study the information technology sector. Souki (2003) resorted to the model to propose strategies for the agents of the beef chain and Lima (2015) researched the subsector of Wiring and Weaving of the Textile Industry. All these authors confirmed the applicability of the GS of Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) in their studies.

Considering the capacity and flexibility of the Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) model, which allows explaining the strategies adopted by organizations operating in different sectors of the economy, the aim was to test their applicability to identify and analyze the adoption of GS in strategic management of one of the most relevant Brazilian clubs.

For the purpose of this article, we chose to emphasize four of the thirteen GS in the Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) model, namely: (i) Adaptation, (ii) Cooperation, (iii) Product-Market Differentiation, (iv) Opportunities considering the relevance of these GS in the strategic management of the MTC in the period of 20 and described in Faria (2013). These GS will be detailed below.

The Adaptation Strategy is characterized as a process of adjustment between the organization and the environment, aiming at the harmonization of the business strategy with the new internal and





/ or external requirements (SERRALHEIRO, 2004). Thus, the company seeks to modify its way of acting in the search for a dynamic balance, according to the business environment, and, eventually, establish new strengths and eliminate its weaknesses. For this reason, the Adaptation Strategy seeks to respond to changes in the business environment, increasing organizational performance (GIEZEN, 2013).

According to Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), Adaptation GS is the strategy of broader business application, including for non-conventional or non-profit organizations.

In the Cooperation Strategy, according to Guimarães (2000), organizations act to help other companies, aiming to achieve benefits for both parties, and not always these benefits are financial in nature. The action is apparently altruistic and illogical for those who think only of competition and immediate profits, as Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) point out. Organizations can actively cooperate with one another in a specific activity and yet actively compete in other activities. The level of cooperation between companies would be determined by the capacity of their resources (VIANA, 2013; SHAKER, 2015; VIANA et al., 2015)

According to Viana et al. (2015), competition has migrated from the scope of action between organizations to the sphere of productive chains, making it fundamental that companies operating in the same industry develop Cooperation and Coordination Strategies through their various links, aiming not only to meet but exceed the expectations of consumers.

Partnerships, strategic alliances, joint ventures and outsourcing are some examples of co-operative and coordination alternatives that have been used in several production chains, due to increased competition in different business sectors (SOUKI; ANTONIALLI, 2004).

According to Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), the GS of Product-Market Differentiation starts from the premise that it is fundamental to differentiate the company from its competitors in order to achieve a more favorable competitive environment. Such differentiation may cover one

or more aspects such as market segments, products and/or product lines, forms of business activity, etc.

It is understood that in this GS, the company must define which segments of the market will be served, what the differentials of the products and/or services will be offered, what prices may be charged and what marketing strategies should be used in order to serve them competitively (NICKELS; WOOD, 1999; SOUKI; ANTONIALLI, 2004; RAHIMIC; USTOVIC, 2011).

Souki and Antonialli (2004) state that Opportunities GS occurs in situations in which the organization achieves especially favorable conditions in certain periods, but in others it operates with very low levels of activity. Thus, due to variations in the opportunities, there is a large fluctuation of activities and billing between the periods. During times when opportunities are reduced, they must keep operating in a leaner way. On the other hand, when more favorable conditions emerge, they begin to operate with large volume of activities and billing.

Currently, organizations are not only required to be present in key markets, but also to increase productivity, reduce costs, improve product quality, invest in employee qualification and develop new technologies. In this context, the definition of GS is broad strategies that companies can adopt and guide their entire value system. In 1994, the Zaccarelli and Fischmann study emphasizes that the concept and use of GS have emerged almost simultaneously with business strategic planning, and illustrates the types of use for GS so that they can direct and achieve their strategic objectives in pursuit for better organizational performance.

As previously mentioned, due to the limitations of available space, the four GS that presented the most relevant ones, among the thirteen EGs proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), were described for the theoretical basis of this article.



### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the eagerness to achieve the objective of this research to identify and analyze the GS adopted in the management of MTC, in the last three decades, based on the model proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), a case study was developed (YIN, 2010), with Minas Tênis Clube, located in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

It is a qualitative and descriptive research, as suggested by Flick (2009), Godoy (2010), Minayo (2012) and Nobre et al. (2016). Regarding the temporal approach, it is part of a cross-sectional study.

For data collection, 25 in-depth personal interviews were conducted, and the interviewees were selected by the sampling system for judgment and convenience. Those interviewed belonged to the following groups: (a) partner and/or counselor; (b) management (management); (c) management (employee); (d) public power; (e) partner company; (f) supplier; and (g) athlete and former athlete.

The semi-structured interview scripts that were used in this research were based on the characteristics and/or functions of each of the groups mentioned in the MTC, considering also the theoretical basis that supports this research (BARDIN, 2013), where selection, coding and tabulation of the data to be studied were carried out, as opposed to documentary research. It is understood, therefore, that the interview scripts were developed specifically for each of the groups involved in this research.

The interviews lasted from forty minutes to an hour and ten minutes. After saturation, all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed in full, for later content analysis. The information obtained during the interviews was coded, classified, categorized and interpreted based on the GS of Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994), as suggested by Bardin (2013), Godoy (1995), Mozzato and Grzybovski (2011), Minayo (2012) and Nobre et al. (2016).

Content analysis is a tool that allows us to understand the meanings that the social actors express in their discourse, seeking to enrich the

reading of the collected data, keeping the focus on the objectives outlined in the study (MOZZATO; GRZYBOVSKI, 2011).

In addition to the in-depth interviews and the bibliographic research typical of scientific works, a documentary research was also carried out at the Brenno Renato Memory Center, which is linked to the MTC's Culture Management. This survey of documents allowed the elucidation of their life history and, consequently, the identification and analysis of the GS used by the Club over the last three decades. It is worth noting that the adoption of different instruments for data collection has been recommended by authors such as Gunther (2006), Fonseca (2009), Minayo (2010), Patton (2015), Silva and Batista (2015) and Nobel et al. (2016).

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results was structured in order to present illustrative examples of four of the thirteen GS proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) that have been adopted by the MTC over the last three decades. In this way, the following GS will be presented: (i) Adaptation, (ii) Cooperation, (iii) Product-Market Differentiation and (iv) Opportunities.

In the present research, the Adaptation GS reflects the approaches proposed by Serralheiro (2004), since MTC keeps constant its effort to meet the great diversity of demands of its members. Thus, the environment defines strategies and solutions as they influence their material and organizational conditions. In this context, the Adaptation GS was evidenced through actions such as the evaluation of satisfaction of associates and also the segmentation of the market that is promoted by the MTC, in order to meet the specificities of associates with profiles and different demands. In this way, the maintenance of an organizational structure adequate to the needs and requirements of the different profiles of members evidences the adaptation of the MTC to the internal and external environments

It should be noted that satisfaction surveys are conducted by the MTC twice a year, allowing



Club administration to assess the quality of the products and services offered by identifying what is not meeting the needs and desires of the members. What is adequate and what still can be improved. Based on the results of these surveys, the MTC seeks to adapt to the wishes of its members, as mentioned in the following statements:

- "The Club hired the services of a company with the purpose of identifying the demands and giving greater satisfaction to the actors involved in the day to day of the MTC, looking for continuous improvements. From these surveys emerged part of the performance indicators that are used today in the management of the Club." Testimony of the interviewee 13 (Partner company)

- "Formerly, the member felt deferred to the sport, but after the beginning of the satisfaction surveys, he felt more valued and satisfied with the Club."

Testimony of the interviewee 22 (Director)

Also, with regard to GS Adaptation, MTC performs a work of segmentation of its diverse target groups in the desire to adapt to the demands of its members in a more specific way. This is because the Club offers services for people with very broad large age ranges, ranging from babies to people of advanced age. In addition, the public served have very different interests. While some associates prioritize sports services at the competition level, others emphasize sport as a form of leisure and health. Also noteworthy are those who attend the Club for having social interests (dances, typical parties and other events), cultural (dance, theater, music shows) or educational (private lessons and school accompaniment for children and adolescents).

The following statements illustrate the way in which MTC develops actions focused on each of its various market segments. Such actions are ...

- "[...] targeting all age groups. From 3 years to the best age (elders), we have activities oriented. Before 3 years old, there are free activities where the parents or the escort brings the baby. So the Club has activities of entertainment, leisure, sports and culture for

all the age groups of the "minastenista" family. "

Testimony of the interviewee 20 (Club Officer)

To better meet the demands of the various membership profiles, MTC sought different physical spaces, as shown in the following statement. This way, the Club looked for alternatives to provide ...

"[...] a better distribution of members according to the locations of the units. For example, I realized that Minas-I usually and concentrates more people of the young age group, because it is central and easy to reach. Minas Country and Minas Nautical are emptier, and for me, who also seek privacy, in the sense of not dividing micro space with others, inside a pool, or within an activity, it allows you to see more the part of the family, especially for children. "

Testimony of the interviewee 10 (Club Member)

The cooperation GS was observed in relation to the various partnerships that have been developed by the MTC in the last three decades, in order to increase its competitive capacity (GOLDKIND and PARDASANI, 2012) .

One of the factors that fostered the development of cooperation between clubs and other sectors of the economy was the governmental liberation, even during the 1980s, of clubs' sponsorship contracts by private companies. This made possible the existence of partnerships between clubs and companies from different sectors. From these facts, several companies began to sponsor teams and athletes from different sports modalities of the MTC, according to the following story:

- "[...] FIAT is our partner to this day, not as a sponsor of men's volleyball, but it is moving to other areas of the club as a sponsor and is still our partner."

Testimony of the interviewee 08 (Ex-athlete)

The importance of sponsorships for the viability of the activities of the various sports modalities depends on the existence of



partnerships with other private and/or public organizations, as can be seen in the following statements:

- "[...] each modality is managed according to the sponsorship budget."

Testimony of the interviewee 18 (Ex-athlete)

- "[...] we want to win every championship as long as we have the sponsorship and resources to fund it."

Testimony of the interviewee 20 (Employee)

- "[...] something that gives feedback to the sponsor, because the teams also have to give results to give this visibility to everyone, not only to the Club, but also to the sponsor. Sponsorship has brought a bit more responsibility, but I think that's a natural move."

Testimony of the interviewee 14  
(Representative of the public power)

In addition to partnerships in the sports field, MTC maintains several cooperation agreements with companies that are considered as exponents in their sectors of activity, seeking mutual benefits for organizations and offering a greater variety of products and services to its members. The following statements illustrate this:

- "Our CVC store is one of the most profitable in Brazil. They provide the associate, in addition to good travel packages, the possibility of obtaining a discount on the Club's monthly fee, calculated based on a percentage of the amount spent in the store. Then there is the member who does not pay monthly, does not pay condominium, because he travels a lot and that is reverted in a percentage of discount for his quota"

Testimony of the interviewee 20 (Employee)

- "Another important example is the partnership between MTC and Unimed. The Club entered into an agreement with this institution aiming at offering health plans with lower prices for the Minas associates."

Testimony of the interviewee 02 (Employee)

- "Culture is another major concern of MTC, but until recently, it was still very subtle. Today, the

Club is strategically positioned in relation to the sector, and has as one of the objectives to be strong in the area of culture as it is in the area of sports. A very clear example of this was the construction of a large theater in partnership with Bank Bradesco."

Testimony of the interviewee 11 (Associate)

- "Theater in partnership with Bradesco could not have been built if the club did not seek growth in this area. So, the idea of the theater was not a thoughtless thing, quite the contrary, a research was done back there, planning was done back there, also looking for the strategic partners to enable exactly this planning."

Testimony of the interviewee 02  
(Employee)

- "The partnership established between Minas and Azul Linhas Aéreas allowed the associate to become a Sapphira member and have some differentiated benefits such as not facing queues for check-in."

Testimony of the interviewee 17 (Associate)

The GS Product-Market Differentiation reflects the position adopted by MTC to provide superior quality of products and services offered to its *stakeholders*, compared to other Brazilian clubs (RAHIMIC; USTOVIC, 2011). In addition, the market for MTC's activity, segmented in leisure, sports, culture and education, defines the mix of products and services made available by the Club to its members (SOUKI; ANTONIALLI, 2004; AMBONI; SILVA; ANDRADE, 2012).

The Club perceived that sports training courses constitute an important niche for its consolidation as an institution that favors and stimulates the family relationship. In this sense, it started offering different activities for each of the family members. Currently, the Club offers a wide range of programs for children, adolescents, youth, adults and the elderly. The following statements confirm these assertions.

- "From the moment you have your child doing a sport, you have your wife or your spouse doing a bodybuilding activity or whatever the value of the condo completely changes its meaning. The value perceived is another."

Testimony of the interviewee 08 (Ex-athlete)





- “[...] with four units with diversified leisure options, a Club that meets the needs of family routine for the location, and is very beneficial for new couples, who are there early in life with small children and, at the same time, at the other end, in a very significant way, the third age by the availability conditions of time and also by the location”.

Testimony of the interviewee 16 (Associate)

- “We have the first stage called the basic course, which children from 3 to 9 years are associated and this course is subdivided into three phases. It is almost a physical education, in the most literal expression of the word, in which we are educating the physique of the child so that later she may be able to reproduce and to advance in the motor coordination of the physical activity. [...] what we can guarantee is that through the teachings of sport, discipline, rule, respect, etc., that is planted in the child. From there, up to high-income categories, there is the rule of the market and what is the sport itself

Testimony of the interviewee 18  
(Former athlete)

- “[...] each unit has a profile during the week and another at the weekend, since the public that comes during the week comes to the gym, comes to practice sports, which are the competitive part, they are the athletes, the academies, the schools. On the weekends, the class that was working, comes to the Club in search of leisure.”

Testimony of the interviewee 04 (Counselor)

The GS of opportunities is characterized by the company's identification of exceptionally favorable conditions that may occur on certain occasions and which may be used to increase its competitiveness and/or profitability (ZACCARELLI; FISCHMANN, 1994; SOUKI; ANTONIALLI, 2004; JONES, 2012). As per MTC, it was possible to identify the GS of Opportunities particularly at times when its new units were acquired, which allowed to expand the physical areas of the Club, increasing its assets. In addition, the number of members was expanded and the Club started offering more products and services. The following testimonies confirm these affirmations:

- “In the 1980s, the government offered the MTC the area in which Minas-II is today. [...] at the time it was understood that the expansion of the Club was important in order to meet the growing number of members. To help finance the construction of Minas-II, the Club launched new market shares.”

Testimony of the interviewee 02 (Club employee)

- “In the 1980s, MBR offered the Club the area in which Minas Náutico is located and, after several discussions and negotiations, Minas settled in the area. This represented a great opportunity for the Club, as it served as an anchor for the Alphaville real estate project. But in this case, Minas Náutico is a separate company, in which Minas holds 51% of the quotas and is responsible for its management.”

Testimony of the interviewee 19 (Club Associate)

- “I think a great opportunity that helped Minas to grow was the incorporation of the Country Club of Belo Horizonte, which was mainly due to the cost-benefit ratio. There were about 1,400 members in the Country, some 700 of whom were defaulters. Then they became entitled to attend Minas Tênis Clube, which at that time already had 20,000 members. This acquisition increased the Club's area by 289,750m<sup>2</sup>, or 4.5 times more than the sum of the areas of Minas-I and Minas-II. It has brought more comfort and leisure options for members, as well as new spaces for the training of grassroots teams.”

Testimony of the interviewee 03 (Club employee)

This article describes the strategies of Adaptation, Cooperation, Product-Market Differentiation and Opportunities adopted by Minas Tênis Clube, starting in 1980, using the GS model proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994).

It was found that, from 1980 to 2013, Minas adopted management practices that contemplate these GSs and that allowed the recognition and strengthening of its brand by associates, partners, employees and governments.

In choosing the scope of the work and the adopted methodology the limitations of the academic research appear. This restriction is fundamental to make research feasible. In this study, the methodological choice was a limiting factor, because this research is a cross-sectional



study in which the data were observed, measured and collected only at one point of time. It should be emphasized that qualitative research does not allow generalizations.

The information obtained in the in-depth interviews involves a certain degree of subjectivity in the data analysis and may suffer some kind of influence from the researcher. To minimize such interference, given the position and role of the researcher and considering that the reactions of the respondents can not be controlled, the interviews were conducted by an interviewer neutral to the process.

In this context, conducting quantitative surveys with a larger number of respondents and with adequate statistical treatment will complement the results of this research and, thus, will provide subsidies for the understanding of the GS used by the Club as well as the formulation and implementation of new strategies for the purpose to improve the results obtained with this management model.

Another limitation of this research concerns the sample used. It is necessary that further research be carried out considering the proposed analysis model for the MTC stakeholders, in order to analyze the specific reality in the management of each of the Minas units. Thus, it will be possible to obtain a broader picture of the efficiency of the GS, allowing comparisons between the four units and improving the benchmarking between them.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The model proposed by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) is used in different market segments, size of organization, management styles, and independent of the location of the enterprise and the time of studies because the authors systematized these EGs. Thus, these GS are applicable to different Brazilian organizations and allow to identify and analyze their adoption in the management of organizations of leisure, culture, sport, entertainment and education as is the case of MTC.

As explained, the GS described by Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) were evidenced

in the management of the MTC, from 1980 to 2013, and reinforced the management style that strengthen the vision of the Club: "To be a benchmark for success and victory, in a way across generations ", presented in the Strategic Management Manual 2011-2013 (MINAS TENNIS CLUB, 2011).

The Adaptation GS reflects the approaches proposed by Serralheiro (2004), since MTC maintains constant efforts to meet the great diversity of its members' demands, since both the environment defines strategies and solutions and influences their material and organizational conditions. It should be noted that the maintenance of an organizational structure adequate to the needs and requirements of the members evidences the adaptation of the MTC favorable to this position, according to Brown and Eisenhardt (1999) and Reis and Monteiro (2012) studies.

The GS of Cooperation reinforces the partnerships developed by the MTC in this period, aiming to increase its competitive capacity (GOLDKIND and PARDASANI, 2012), in view of the Club's mission: "To assure members of the full satisfaction and joy of living through sports, culture and education "(MINAS TENNIS CLUB, 2011).

The study and adoption of outsourcing practices of some services provided by the MTC to the members reinforce the importance of cooperation, as described by Souki and Antonialli (2004), allowing the services to be performed specialized companies in each of the areas in which are required (ZACCARELLI, 2000), seeking the relational learning with their partners, which is consonant with the studies of Oliveira and Gonçalves (2011).

The positioning of products and services offered by MTC to its stakeholders reflects the GS of Product-Market Differentiation, evidencing the importance of quality in the competitiveness that Minas presents in relation to its sector, which corroborates the works of Rahimic and Ustovic (2011) .

The MTC market, segmented in leisure, sport, culture and education, defines the mix of products and services offered by MTC to its



members, according to Souki and Antonialli (2004). In addition, the loyalty of the members of the MTC, considering the club sector, confirms the studies of Amboni, Silva and Andrade (2012) on the Brazilian retail sector.

The GS of opportunity demonstrates MTC's commitment to detect and take advantage of ample opportunities, favoring its associates and partners, corroborating with the studies of Jones (2012) and Ribeiro e Costa (2017). Thus, mentioning the commitment to fit the top teams, considering the funds made available by the sponsors each year, exemplifies the downsizing mentioned by Zaccarelli (2000).

It was observed in this study that the highest incidence in the management of the MTC was the Adaptation, Cooperation, Product-Market Differentiation and Opportunity GS, suggesting future actions to be put into practice in the MTC, such as: (i) identification of competitive benchmarks outside the club sector; (ii) improvement of long-term goals and strategies; (iii) adoption of successful management techniques in overseas clubs.

The results of the research generated subsidies so that the managers of the Club could understand how MTC elaborates a plan of strategic and market actions seeking to improve the sustainability and productivity of the Club.

In order to reach its current position in the club sector, Minas Tênis Clube had to adopt a series of strategies over time that needed to be identified and cataloged to understand the success of the practices adopted in those thirty years.

The GS Adaptation subsidized managers to focus on the best opportunities, rejecting less promising projects. By dynamically adjusting MTC activities to stakeholder demands, they obtained greater approval in the areas of leisure, sports, culture and education.

GS Cooperation strengthened MTC and its associates to address environmental pressures and forces, such as funders, changes in society, and diminishing resources. The presence of cooperation in the relationship structure demonstrated the importance of the search for

relational learning in the cooperative chain. Thus, MTC was one of the first clubs to get sponsorship for its sports teams, as quoted in this work.

The results of GS Differentiation Product-Market are in strengthening the relationship of the Club (i) with the associates, based on the increments adopted in the diversity, regularity and specificity of the offered services and, (ii) with the partners and suppliers in the generation of new business opportunities.

In GS Opportunity, a relevant aspect is the organization's need to maintain an effective communication interface with its environment. Minas detected the signs of opportunity to identify and capture the best opportunities, such as the construction of Minas-II facilities, the installation of Minas Náutico and the incorporation of the Country Club of Belo Horizonte.

It is of fundamental importance that companies understand and know the possible strategies, so that they can adopt those that best fit the organization and the moment in which the company is living. In a more dynamic business environment, the main managerial result is associated with the perception of the stakeholders, especially the associates, in the cost-benefit relation of existing relationships with Minas Tênis Clube.

This work fills a gap in the scientific literature and becomes important for presenting management practices adopted to MTC a prominent position in the club sector.

In this context, the professionalism adopted in its strategies makes it a reference for other clubs that have an interest in improving their strategic practices, besides having a sports management that includes leisure, education and culture, constituting an aid both for this sector and for federations and sports confederations.

It is recommended, based on the evidence reported by the interviewees, that further studies may be conducted to identify the adoption of other strategies by the MTC, as well as the extension of the research period to the current eight decades of life, given its importance to society if Minas Gerais and for the club sector in



the national scenario. In addition, it is proposed that the GS models of Zaccarelli and Fischmann (1994) may be tested in other clubs, or even in other sports segments given their specificities that generate different management plans and

proposals, making it difficult to compare the different models adopted. For this reason, this fact is a limitation of this research and may be a proposal for future work.

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